

WILEY

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Author(s): R. D. Budworth

Source: *History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January-March, 1913), pp. 7-21

Published by: Wiley

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44991441>

Accessed: 24-06-2019 12:31 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Wiley is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *History*

THE WARS OF THE ROSES *

By THE REV. R. D. BUDWORTH, M.A.

I DO not intend to give a detailed account of the Wars of the Roses. A list of their battles with dates and results can be found in any history text-book, even if, as I presume is not the case, you have not them at your fingers' ends already. I shall confine myself to a few remarks upon the causes, features and results of these wars. It used to be the custom in certain of the school examinations—the entrance Army examination for instance—deliberately to ignore this particular period as being of little interest or importance, but that I venture to think was a mistake. It is quite true that the period taken as an isolated portion of English history may be considered as of no great importance for the history student, but considered as a crisis to which foregoing events had for a century been leading up, and which has enormously affected our history ever since, and regarded as a stage through which society founded on feudalism was bound to pass, the period is of no inconsiderable interest. Moreover, it has the peculiarity, which alone would make it worth some investigation, of being an utterly un-English phase in our history.

There is, I think, only one other portion of English history that can be regarded as in any way parallel to it, and that is so much earlier chronologically that we can neither gain as much information about it, nor feel the same eagerness to elucidate its details. I mean the brief and very unattractive period when Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda put all England at loggerheads by their struggle for the throne. Those were days when no poor man's life or property was his own, when the big man robbed, tortured and slew as it pleased him, and when the friend of to-day was the foe of to-morrow. But even then there was not the spirit of revengefulness abroad in the land that was a feature of the York and Lancaster struggle. For the time generosity, chivalry, pity for a fallen foe, loyalty to cause or leader seemed to have vanished from the country. It was not so much that the great man ill-treated the small, or that the strong man extorted money from the weaker, but that those who for the moment had the upper hand deliberately and in cold blood

*A paper read before the North-Eastern Counties' Branch of the Historical Association at Armstrong College, revised by the Author.

paid off real or imaginary wrongs on those who had temporarily gone under. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"—your turn yesterday; mine to-day. "Your father killed mine; therefore you must die", were Lord Clifford's words to the boy Earl of Rutland after Wakefield, and they might be taken as the motto of both sides during the last two-thirds of the war. After the first few encounters every victory was consummated by the murder of noble prisoners upon the field of battle, and the execution of others within a few hours afterwards. "Leave room for those of March and Warwick", were the exultant words of the one woman who took a leading part in the struggle, as she watched the heads of York and Salisbury being placed upon the walls of York city.

It was a bad training school for the young. One instance of that will suffice. After the second battle of St. Albans, Queen Margaret showed no pity to those who fell into her hands. Lord Bonville and Sir Thomas Kymill were brought before her. She told them they must die, and sent for her son, the Prince of Wales, a child not yet eight years old, and asked him to choose what death they should suffer. When the boy was brought into the tent, she said, "Fair son, what manner of death shall these knights, whom ye see here, die?" The boy answered "Let them have their heads taken off". Little wonder that Sir Thomas cried out, "May God destroy those who taught thee this manner of speech".

There was no noble family that had not to lament a lengthy roll of losses. During the thirty years that intervened between the first battle of St. Albans and of Bosworth Field, three kings met with a violent death. Twenty-six Knights of the Garter perished either by the sword or by the headsman's axe. Of the royal house of Plantagenet, Richard, Duke of York, and his son, Lord Rutland, fell at Wakefield, the Duke of Clarence died a traitor's death, Edward V and his young brother were murdered in the Tower, and Richard, their uncle, was slain at Bosworth. Of the house of Lancaster, Henry the King died a mysterious death in prison, and his son was brutally killed after Tewkesbury. The Queen of Edward IV. lost by violent deaths a father, a husband, a son and two brothers, besides the two young princes, her sons, already mentioned, and two brothers-in-law. Three Dukes of Somerset and a son of one of them, four members of the house of Stafford, the Earl of Salisbury, his three sons, and four other Nevilles, five of the great house of Percy, three Talbots, three Courtenays, two De Veres, two Cliffords, and a countless number who bore scarcely less distinguished names died on the battlefield or on the scaffold.

One incident, almost at the beginning of the war, stands out by itself, half humorous, half tragic, wholly pathetic. None but the saintly, utterly unpractical King could have devised such a scene. Certainly none but he could have hoped for any satisfactory result from it. On Ladyday, 1458, after Henry's recovery from his second attack of insanity, a great and solemn ceremony of reconciliation between the leaders of the two rival factions was arranged. It was to take place before the high altar of St. Paul's. On the appointed day the King, arrayed in royal mantle and with the crown on his head, made his way through the streets to the cathedral. In front of him and behind him marched the rival barons two and two, each with his hand in that of an enemy. The Earl of Salisbury (father of the King-maker) walked with the Duke of Somerset, whose father he had helped to slay at St. Albans, and who in his turn was to assist at Salisbury's execution after Wakefield. The King-maker himself walked side by side with the Duke of Exeter, whose son he was destined to kill. Behind the King went Margaret of Anjou holding the hand of her hated foe, Richard, Duke of York, whose dead body one day she would triumph over and mutilate—and so on down a long line of sworn foes arm in arm. A memorable "love day", as the Chronicler quaintly termed it, but a ghastly comedy in the light of succeeding events, and a fine subject for the pen of a Greek tragedian.

If the amount of noble blood shed was a marked feature of these wars, no less a feature was the kaleidoscopic shifting of sides and leaders. The sworn foe of yesterday was the plighted ally of to-day. The murderer of the father became the supporter of the son. The bearer of the white rose one summer carried the red rose as his badge before the next spring came round. A change of sides, even in the thick of battle, was hardly to be regarded as a reproach. Sir Andrew Trollope, that stalwart veteran of the French wars, who came with Warwick from Calais with 600 of the Calais garrison, set the example at the Rout of Ludford. When night fell he and his 600 followers were the backbone of the Yorkist forces; before sunrise they had joined the Lancastrian army; and a few hours later were engaged in hot pursuit of those who had been their leaders of the day before. It is consoling to think that the arch-traitor was one of those who fell at Towton. In the raid on Sandwich, made by the Kingmaker's men while he was in exile at Calais, Lord Rivers and his son were among the captives taken and conveyed across the Channel. They were brought before the

Earls of March, Salisbury and Warwick, and were soundly "rated" by each earl in turn, as the Chronicle narrates, and were imprisoned in Calais Castle. Before many months had passed they had become enthusiastic Yorkists, and in a few short years Lord Rivers was to find himself the father-in-law of that same Earl of March, and was eventually to lose his life in the service of the house of York. Lord Grey of Ruthyn did at Northampton what Trollope had done at Ludford. The final battle of the wars was to be decided by a piece of unblushing treason on the part of the Stanleys. Royal blood itself could play the double game. George of Clarence, "false, fleeting, perjured Clarence", could show himself a twice-dyed traitor, once to his brother and King, and once to his father-in-law and ally. The great Kingmaker himself owes his title to a change of sides. He could swear fealty and affection to the woman whose hands were stained with his own father's blood, could give his daughter into her keeping as the bride-to-be of her son, could induce Clarence for the time being to join the new, unblest alliance, could flaunt it among Lancastrian lords with Lancastrian blood upon his hands, while Margaret the Queen, of whom we should least have expected it, could sacrifice her old enmity and clasp hands with him who had done most to rob her of her throne.

In all English history there was never so much blood wantonly shed, or so much reckless tying and untying of alliances that seemed likely for every reason usually carrying weight with men to remain unbroken. Humanity and honour seemed for the time to have vanished from among those, who, by their blood and rank, should have been their natural guardians. The only excuse that can be given for them is the old adage that "evil communications corrupt good manners". For forty years Englishmen had been warring in a foreign country, where all ties of blood had been forgotten. In France, North and South France had been split up into two hostile factions, and so great had been their mutual hatred that all idea of kinship, patriotism, honour and pity had been completely lost. There too they had had their "love day" like that which had been celebrated at St. Paul's. The Dukes of Burgundy and Orleans had taken the Sacrament side by side, had arranged to dine together within seven days, and before those seven days had passed Burgundy had successfully planned his rival's assassination. There, too, there had been a mad King, but there in addition had been a Queen living in shameless adultery with her own brother-in-law, and an heir apparent at open warfare with his royal

mother. The whole nation had been divided up into Burgundians and Armagnacs, and in the furious feud that followed morality, private and political, had ceased to exist. The presence in its midst of a foreign foe added the last horror to the desperate state of the French nation. First Burgundy and then Orleans had played off the English alliance against his rival, and the name of country no longer meant anything to a nobility mad for blood and vengeance. Constantly associating with, and allied to, one faction or the other, the Englishman came, not unnaturally, to imbibe their utter lack of principle and to take their standard of honour as his own. He returned home with the Frenchman's ungovernable passions and lust for vengeance, and, though at first traditional and national moderation prevented the worst horrors of civil war, when once the first barriers had been broken down, free rein was given to all the imported yearning for bloodshed, and one act of revenge led on to another, until the result was a vendetta limited neither to family nor clan.

Fortunately the evil was not so widely spread as it might have been. The furious struggle that swept from North to South and back again seems to have affected even the parts of the country through which it passed very little. There were practically no sieges—a town generally yielded at once if threatened. Here and there, and especially in the north of England, a castle would hold out. Edward IV took up his quarters at Durham after Towton, and the Duke of Norfolk in the same city, while the castles of Bamborough, Dunslanburgh and Alnwick were simultaneously besieged, but the first named two gave little trouble, and Alnwick more so only because it was once relieved. Later on, after the battle of Hexham, the same three castles and Norham with them were again besieged, but this time it was only Bamborough that gave any trouble. The brevity of these unimportant sieges was characteristic of the war. As a matter of fact Newcastle and Durham saw as much of the parade of war in those days as almost any city except London, and that was not a great amount. They were of importance chiefly as being convenient headquarters for the Yorkist troops when besieging the castles on the border, or repelling threatening inroads from Scotland. For the rest, there were commissions of array, commissions to put down insurrection, to punish outrages, to arrest seditious persons, to arrest the King's enemies at sea, to prepare beacons on the coast to give warning of invasion. There were blackmailers who roamed the country and extorted money by threats of accusing this or that worthy gentleman or yeoman of being a Scot and therefore the

King's enemy. There were frequent complaints that this or that great nobleman had laid claim to, and seized upon, property to which he had no very obvious right—no doubt thinking himself quite safe in so doing owing to the disturbed state of the country side—but taken as a whole the amount of suffering among the middle and lower classes was neither greater nor less than in the so-called times of peace. The French Chronicler could note that England was a rare instance of a country where, in spite of the callous brutality of the strife, there were no buildings destroyed or demolished by war, and where the mischief of it fell on those who made the war.

The ruin and hardships were almost limited to the great Lords and their liveried retainers. Commerce was but little, if at all, checked at the outset of the fighting and later on was actually developed by the closer friendship with Flanders and the suzerain house of Burgundy. Justice was little disturbed. The worthy John Pastons, father and son, could appeal, and with success ultimately, to the Law to win back a manor that three great Dukes of Norfolk had falsely claimed and seized. The Judges rode quietly and regularly on their circuits, and elections were held without much more disturbance or bloodshed than took place 250 or 300 years later. The schoolboy at Eton wrestled almost as unconcernedly and apparently almost as unsuccessfully with his Latin verses as the schoolboy of to-day. Country ladies sent up to London for a gown of "goodly blue or else bright sanguine", or for a girdle, or for a pot of treacle, or for some other luxury, with as much seriousness as a country lady does now. Good Mistress Paston of Norfolk at any rate did, though to give her her due she asserted that she would rather have her husband at home to nurse in his illness than even "a new gown though it be of scarlet". England even in the height of the struggle did not become brutalized, and I much doubt whether it was a worse place for the ordinary citizen to live in then than it was earlier in the time of the Edwards, or later under Henry VIII of doubtful memory, or perhaps even in more recent times.

We can gather something of what life was between 1455 and 1485 from that invaluable storehouse of information *The Paston Letters*. Without them we should have fared badly. The time fell between two periods better supplied with literary helps. As Professor Oman puts it, "The men of the fifteenth century are far less well known to us than are their grandfathers or their grandsons. In the fourteenth century the Chroniclers were still working on their old scale; in the sixteenth, the literary spirit had descended on the whole

nation, and great men and small were writing hard at history, as at every branch of knowledge. But in the days of Lancaster and York the old fountains had run dry, and the new flood of the Renaissance had not risen. The materials for reconstructing history are both scanty and hard to handle". The Chroniclers of the next period are partial, their views are coloured by Tudor sympathies and Tudor absolutism. The more contemporary ones, such as William of Worcester, are dull and throw but little light on the social history of the period. But in the Paston letters we have a unique and priceless record of the times, undistorted by fear of publication or censorship. We can glean from them at least an impression of the life of the ordinary folk, of those who were not high-born enough to play a leading part in the struggle, and yet were on the fringe of it, and were as much affected by it as any but the chief actors were.

We learn from them that education was not so much neglected as might be supposed. The Paston family of three generations could themselves write coherently, even with a certain amount of elegance; they could take an interest in books, and would pay for having certain works on chivalry, morality, and history transcribed, and moreover, poetry and romance. They had a tolerably accurate knowledge of the law, and of such learning as the Universities of the day supplied. They were certainly hospitable, courteous, and punctilious in their behaviour and dealings towards their equals and superiors, and there is no particular evidence of their treating their inferiors harshly or discourteously. Their speech was free, but not more so than might be expected from the age they lived in. They sought—and naturally—for the protection of powerful patrons, but do not seem to have been over-subservient to them. Their hours were regular; they rose early, dined at noon or before, took their siesta after dinner, at any rate in the summer, and, as artificial light was scanty, retired early to rest. They travelled more than we might have supposed—to London frequently, sometimes, presumably on business, to Calais, where in those days an Englishman could feel a right of proprietorship, and could imagine himself at home but for the perils and discomforts of the Channel voyage. Briefly, we may conclude that the war affected the lives of these good folk wonderfully little, as also the lives of others of the same rank, for it is fair to regard the Pastons as representative of the culture and civilization of the times. The letters, it must be remembered, were written to and by one family and its clientèle—friends, neighbours, even domestic servants contributed to the collection—and, as I

mentioned before, the letters of three generations are included. Now and again, of course, the war made itself unpleasantly felt in their lives, but on the whole they were not much perturbed, and seem to have been surprisingly indifferent as to which side would gain the upper hand.

This indifference to, and immunity from, the hardships of war may be partly explained by a consideration of the causes that brought about the struggle. I say causes because it is impossible to assign one definite reason for the outbreak of hostilities. One can only suggest what appear to be the main influences that brought the two factions to open warfare. In the first place it was, I believe, inevitable that as soon as a weak King was seated on the throne some struggle of the kind should take place. The feudal system in England was at the root of it all. The great Tenants-in-chief with their long tail of retainers must always have been a standing menace to peace. This had been, and still was the case, to an even greater extent in France. So long as a strong King, supported by the Church, could put down rebellion with a firm hand there was a reasonable prospect of quiet, but when the weaker monarch ascended the throne, then was the great barons' opportunity. Stephen, Henry III, Edward II, Richard II, and the sixth Henry himself are instances in point. John also may be cited, more because he had offended the Church than because he can rightly be called a weak king. Given an incapable ruler and a questionable title to the throne, there was little doubt what would happen. Edward III was unwittingly responsible for the actual outbreak. He had left too many sons, whose various descendants were always on the alert to wrest fresh power, or the crown itself, from the relative who for the time being happened to be the recognised ruler. If Richard II had been an eastern potentate he would have used the bow-string freely among his relations, and the Wars of the Roses might have been avoided. Moreover, as the direct male descent had in most cases failed, complications had become greater, confusion was worse confounded. For the time the house of Lancaster had been strong enough to maintain itself on the throne. Henry IV was better pleasing to a discontented nobility than Richard II, but even he had his difficulties, and it was necessary for him to shear the great house of Percy of its glory before he could consider himself even remotely secure. His able and energetic son solved the problem of keeping peace at home by making war abroad. The luckless sixth Henry could do neither with any degree of success. The disastrous termination of the French war allowed the great nobles to turn their attention

homewards, and idle hands soon found mischievous work to do. Again, the entrusting of the government to certain autocratically selected ministers, as, for instance, Suffolk and Somerset, was a direct breach of the tacit agreement that Henry IV had entered into and Henry V had observed of governing through and with the Commons of the realm. The approach to constitutional government that they had recognised was now entirely abandoned. The foolish fondness of Henry VI for certain of the less capable and least popular of the nobility, his Beaufort relatives in particular, afforded an excuse for interference. Like all weak men, Henry could be obstinate, and obstinate he was in upholding his favourites. It only required a popular and capable leader, with some injustice suffered to complain of, to set things going, and Richard of York was in every way eligible for the position. Twice governor of Normandy, he had been robbed of his post by Somerset's jealousy and sent into virtual banishment as governor of Ireland. There he had lost neither reputation nor popularity, as no doubt the Court party hoped he would, and when he thought that the time was ripe, he had landed unbidden in England and taken up his natural position as leader of the anti-court party. It is more than doubtful if, when he crossed the Irish Sea, he realised what the step he was taking meant, or whether he had in his mind any thought of claiming the throne, but events combined to make him the recognised heir to the crown, and all malcontents, and many who were honestly distressed with the state of the country, placed themselves under his banner.

So far the situation was curiously parallel to that of Richard II and the Lords Appellant. Except that the house of Lancaster was now the attacked and not the attacking party, and that the house of York had taken its place as leader of the opposition, the same names for the most part were represented among the discontented barons. The whole business might perhaps have ended as the Lords Appellant incident ended, if Henry had been as cunningly diplomatic and as long-suffering as Richard had been, and if no Prince of Wales had been born just at a time when matters seemed to be becoming more settled. Having once tasted the sweets of a regency and of being the heir presumptive, and having also learnt that his shift would be short if Margaret of Anjou caught him off his guard, York could hardly be expected to retire quietly. Whatever his original aim had been, his ambition was now thoroughly aroused, and he was prepared to put all to the test and, like

certain dukes of later times, to die in the last ditch. So, whatever we may consider the first causes of the war to have been, it resolved itself eventually into a great family struggle between two branches of Edward III's descendants, supported by a close ring of their relatives by blood and by marriage.

Until one comes to look into it thoroughly, it is hard to realise how closely linked by descent and marriage the nobility of England was in those times. On the Yorkist side we find Richard the Duke supported not only by his four sons, March, Clarence, Gloucester, and Rutland, but by Salisbury, a brother-in-law, and Warwick, a nephew. Salisbury and Warwick again were closely allied by marriage with the Duke of Norfolk, the Beauchamps, the Lattimers, Abergavennys, Montacutes, Bouchiers and other families of lesser note. It is only necessary to remember that at this time the Peerage of England represented in Parliament for many years did not exceed thirty-five in number, and certainly never rose to fifty, to realise what influence the great York-Neville combination must have possessed. This is brought still more forcibly to one's mind when one knows that early in Henry VI's reign Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland, had two grandsons, four sons, and five sons-in-law summoned to the House of Peers, one-third practically of the whole number, and though the elder Nevilles were afterwards to be found on the opposite side to that of the younger branch, the fact remains that the Peerage was almost a gigantic family combination. If we bear in mind again what territorial influence the Neville Earls, Salisbury and Warwick, had behind them, it is easy to understand what a tremendous asset their alliance was for the Yorkist faction. Mainly by a judicious marriage Salisbury possessed the greater part of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Yorkshire, the last named through his mother. But Warwick was not so easily content. Thanks in his case also to a marriage into a family whose last male heir conveniently died at the critical time, the Kingmaker's lands comprised a large portion of South Wales, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Hampshire, Sussex, Essex, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Cambridgeshire, Rutland, and Nottinghamshire.

The Lancastrian faction was hardly less closely united by family ties. The Beauforts, close relatives of the King himself, with the house of Somerset at their head, formed one large faction. A still larger one consisted of the elder

Nevilles, who were again united by marriage with the Percies, and by blood with the Duke of Buckingham. The last mentioned, though a brother-in-law of Salisbury and an uncle of Warwick, took the King's side, apparently through sheer loyalty, in which case he was perhaps the only instance of disinterestedness among all the great nobles of the time. It is fair then to say that the Wars of the Roses were really a great family quarrel, brought to a head by many and various causes, some new, some which had existed for many years.

As to the results, it is not possible to do more than indicate a few of the most enduring and important. By the time that the war came to an end at Bosworth, York, his four sons, two grandsons, Salisbury, Warwick, the Lancastrian royal family proper, the Beauforts of the male line—all the leaders in the prolonged struggle—had vanished. There was scarcely a nobility worthy of the name left. Of the three great powers that had so far directed the course of English history—the Crown, the Baronage, and the Church—one, the Baronage, had been practically swept out of existence. A second, the Church, had lost its influence and its standing. For the last eighty years or so it had no longer maintained its character as a purely religious body. It no longer sent out from its ranks saints, theologians, and patriots. Its prominent men were statesmen, nothing more, and self-seeking at that. Afraid of the growing spirit of unorthodoxy which threatened its revenues and its authority, it had become subservient to the temporal power, in order that it might indulge the policy of persecution on which it believed its existence depended. By its wealth, its secularity, and that same policy of persecution it had been alienated from the people. It no longer counted as a separate power in the land—it was merely the parasite of the Crown when the Crown was strong, and its tyrant when the Crown was weak.

The virtual disappearance of the Baronage and the Church as factors to be seriously reckoned with left the Crown and the Commons face to face with no intervening force. The Commons, unused to such a position, accustomed as they had been to depend upon this or that powerful and wealthy noble, and afraid above all of a renewal of the internecine struggle from which, nevertheless, they had escaped so unexpectedly well, could not reasonably be counted on to display an active opposition. It was not for a century and a quarter that they arrived at the realization of their own strength, and consolidated that strength sufficiently to impose their will upon the Crown. True that in the interval the throne was occupied by the strongest and at the same time the most tactful dynasty

that has reigned in England. True that, by the timely sacrifice of a minister, by gracefully conceding what they saw it was rash to refuse, by the recognition of old forms and precedents, and by assiduously persuading the people that their aims were always exactly in accord with those of their subjects and that their thoughts were entirely devoted to the good of the nation, the Tudors managed to keep the people on their side. But even if all this had been different, the middle classes could hardly have been able to show a bold and united front earlier than they did, when Stuart had succeeded to Tudor. Hence it is directly to the Wars of the Roses that we owe the absolute rule of the Tudors, the comparative ease with which the Reformation was carried through, and less directly, thanks to the unhampered statesmanship of the two Henries and Elizabeth, the rise of England to be a first-rate power in European politics. Later on, when the people came to its own, we can say that unless the Lancastrian and Yorkist struggle had prepared the way, the Stuarts would never have been successfully opposed, and the great Revolution of 1688 would never have taken place. The Wars of the Roses may in themselves be a contemptible and sordid incident in our history, but they had to come, and they have left a very real mark on our Constitution and on our position individually and as a nation to this day.

Whatever its results, the period has given very few really great characters to English history. If one glances over the men who made some mark during these troublous times, there are only one or two that could justly be regarded as rising above their fellows in ability or wisdom, and perhaps only one who can be regarded as being what we should describe as a good man. That one, it is almost needless to say, is the weak, incapable, unpractical but eminently saintly King, Henry VI. He was at once the unwitting cause and the hapless victim of the civil strife that raged round his throne. It is hardly too much to say that from his birth to his death, Fortune never really smiled upon him. The son of a great and, I hold, a good father, he lost that father while he was still in his cradle. He was the grandson on one side of a monarch who was never really King, and whose insanity he inherited, and on the other of a King whose title rested on a usurpation and was notoriously a bad one even in the third generation, the husband of a wife far stronger and more of a man than he was, and who had but little sympathy with his weakness and piety, the father of a late born son, whose promise was quenched by an early and bloody death, the inheritor of a foreign war that it would have taken a Napoleon

to carry through successfully, and of a kingdom which was rife with the evils of family jealousies. He would have adorned a cloister, he destroyed a throne. That, putting it briefly, was the lot of the one righteous man of the time. His pathetic simplicity I have already illustrated by his attempt at a great reconciliation which none but his unworldly wit could have hoped would prove lasting.

Professor Oman thinks that he should have been either a monk or a schoolmaster. My own experience leads me to think that he would not have been a great success in the latter position. One or two details of his character have been handed down by his chaplain.¹ The good King was once known to run out from a State ball horrified because some of the ladies were wearing dresses cut too low at the neck. "Fy, fy, for shame", he cried, "forsooth ye are to blame". That was strong language for him, for in his most agitated and distressed moments he was never heard to swear. "Forsooth and forsooth" was the worst language he ever indulged in. He thought the bathing costumes used at Bath were rather scanty and he therefore hastily left that town. His dress was always black, brown or russet, and he disliked his State robes because of their bright colour so much that on one occasion he presented them to a begging abbot, to the pardonable annoyance of his chamberlain. In his generosity he would give away the same post to two or more applicants. He would write letters of recommendation for two rivals to the same office. Only twice did he put on armour, even during the civil wars, and then he refused to use any weapon in offence or defence upon Christian men. Once, and once only, so far as I know, did he give way to anger, in days when even a saint's temper must have been tried daily. That one occasion was at St. Albans, just previous to the first battle there, and when the Duke of York sent in a demand for the giving up of such persons as he might accuse, "to be dealt with like as they have deserved". "Now I shall know", the King cried, "what traitors are so bold as to raise a host against me in my own land. And by the faith I owe to S. Edward and the crown of England, I will destroy them every mother's son, to have example to all traitors who make such a rising of people against their king and governor. And for a conclusion, say that rather than they shall have any lord here with me at this time, I will this day for his sake and in this quarrel stand myself to live or die". That is the worst one can find to say of him. It was his misfortune that he should

¹ For these I am indebted to Professor Oman.

have found the time so out of joint, and that he should have been born to set it right. Certainly the task was beyond him—that pathetic figure who was taken and retaken in every other battle and was made or unmade King according as the one or other party triumphed, almost, it would seem, without any wish or objection, or even any interest on his own part. And so the unfortunate monarch vanishes from our view in sorrow, and to a certain extent in mystery.

Of the other chief actors few can be called interesting, and none of them wins our sympathies. Margaret of Anjou was Amazon and Fury, yet sometimes a woman. Her redeeming features seem to be a real affection for her son, for whom she would brave any peril, and a contempt for danger. But her craving for revenge, and her treason in bartering English strongholds to France and Scotland in return for their support rob her of our sympathy. She set an example which in later days Marlborough is said to have followed, but her case is much clearer than his. Yet in a way one has a sneaking liking for the woman who sacrificed so much for her cause, was so undaunted by misfortune, and ended her life bereft of husband, son, and crown.

Richard of York—fortunate perhaps in his death, happening as it did before the wars had assumed their worse character—lack of space prevents my noticing. His three sons, Edward, George, and Richard, I must also pass over. Of them little good could be said. The Kingmaker does indeed deserve some mention. Was he a great man, or did he owe his fame to his vast wealth and his “hail fellow well met” temperament, which made him popular with the crowd? An able general, no doubt, as generals went in those days, and something of a statesman, but with his statesmanship warped and hampered by the self-seeking and the shifting policy of the times. Was he the great “Last of the Barons,” as Lytton depicts him, hospitable, generous, a victim of ill-luck and of worse men than himself; or was he merely a schemer for his own ends, whose ambition eventually proved his ruin, because, like other schemers, he failed at last to be true to his own self? It is a problem too difficult to discuss in an article such as this.

I should like to conclude by recalling to you two of the stories—legends perhaps—which to my mind give a redeeming touch to the sordidness of the period. The first is that of the north country bandit whom the fugitive Queen and her infant son encountered after the battle of Towton. “Here, my friend, save the son of thy King,”

were her words as she staked all on the robber's chivalry. And he, the prototype of the Highland "sheep-stealers" who saved Prince Charles Edward nearly 300 years later, did not betray her trust.

The second story is this: After the battle of Bloreheath the Earl of Salisbury drew off his men and marched away by night. "Next day", the old Chronicler relates, "the Earl of Salisbury, if he had stayed, would have been taken, so great were the Queen's forces, who lay only six miles from the field. But they wotted not of the Earl's departure because an Austin Friar shot guns all night in the park at the rear of the field, so that they knew not that the Earl had gone. . . . Next morrow they found neither man nor child in the park save the friar, and he said that it was for fear that he abode in that park, firing the guns to keep up his heart".

The Cause of Napoleon's Death

A REVIEW BY OSCAR HILDESHEIM, M.D.

DR. CHAPLIN has written a very readable little book, which is so obviously inspired by enthusiasm and a love of truth that it would appear ungracious to deal with it too severely.¹

A vast amount of contemporary and subsequent literature treats of Napoleon's life at St. Helena from 1815 to 1821. Much of it goes to shew that there was continual tension between the British Authorities and Napoleon's friends. The former were anxious to believe that their captive was in excellent health, and the latter were concerned to demonstrate that the climate and the general environment were undermining his constitution. Herein lies the interest of the medical details to the layman. But many factors tend to obscure the story. The island was remote from the centres of civilisation; Napoleon was a prisoner, and therefore in many ways suspect; he was moody, arbitrary, and often refused to see people; he distrusted empirical medicine, and was guided largely by his own preconceptions; and his illness, whatever it was, was not, simply and solely, cancer of the stomach. He suffered from what our illiterates sum up admirably in one word as "complications".

Dr. Chaplin's worship of the man of "iron constitution"

¹ *The Illness and Death of Napoleon Bonaparte.* By Arnold Chaplin, M.D. (London: Hirschfeld Bros., Ltd., 2/6 net).